DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 251 006 HE 017 867

AUTHOR Der-Karabetian, Aghop; Best, Beverly
TITLE Motivations of Adult Women Attending College.
PUB DATE [84]
NOTE 14p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adult Students; Employed Women; *Enrollment Influences; *Females; Higher Education; *Learning Motivation; Minority Groups; *Reentry Students; Undergraduate Students; Unemployment; White Students

ABSTRACT

The educational motivation of 200 adult undergraduate college women from four academic groups were examined, using the Educational Participation Scale (Boshier, 1971). The sample ranged in age from 30 to 55 years old, with a median age of 39. Their academic areas of study were business and public administration, health services, liberal arts and home economics, and education and psychology. Overall, the women were motivated highly by "cognitive interest," moderately by "social welfare," "escape/stimulation," and "professional advancement" and low by "social relations." The academic program groups did not differ in social relations, escape/stimulation, and social welfare. On professional advancement, the liberal arts/home economics group scored lowest. Minority women scored higher on social relations, professional advancement, and cognitive interest. Unemployed women score higher on professional advancement and cognitive advancement. Caucasian unemployed women were highest on escape/stimulation and lowest on cognitive interest. (Author/SW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED251006

HE

MOTIVATIONS OF ADULT WOMEN ATTENDING COLLEGE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

by

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Aghop Der-Karabetian

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Aghop Der-Karabetian and Beverly Best

University of La Verne

HE 017 867

For reprint request, write to Aghop Der-Karabetian, Behavioral Science Department, University of La Verne, 1950 Third Street, La Verne, California 91750

Abstract

The educational motivations of 200 adult undergraduate college women from 4 academic groups were examined by the use of the Educational Participation Scale (Boshier, 1971). Overall, the women were motivated highly by Cognitive Interest, moderately by Social Welfare, Escape/Stimulation and Professional Advancement and low by Social Relations. The academic program groups did not differ in Social Relations, Escape/Stimulation and Social Welfare. On Professional Advancement, the liberal arts/home economics group scored lowest. Minority women scored higher on Social Relations, Professional Advancement and Cognitive Interest. Unemployed women scored higher on Professional Advancement and Cognitive Interest. Caucasian unemployed women were highest on Escape/Stimulation and lowest on Cognitive interest.

Motivations of Adult Women Attending College

Introduction

Colleges and universities that were once filled with young people are now actively recruiting the adult population to make up for the drop in enrollment by traditional-age students. If adult learners are to be served, their motivations should be adequately assessed [8]. Specially conspicuous on college campuses today are the non-traditional-age women who are seeking both graduate and undergraduate degrees in various applied and academic fields [6,7]. Previous efforts have been made to draw up the profile of returning women [4]. They may or may not be married and are capable of financing their own education. Many of these students seek degrees that would either prepare them for future careers or help them move up in their present ones. Because of economic necessity, many women have been forced to seek employment and have discovered the need for training in order to fit in the job market. However, other motivations have also been identified. Galliano and Gildea [5] showed that a sense of self-actualization and emotional well-being were prominent considerations among adult students returning to college. Boshier [2] and Bova [3] have also identified motivational factors such as the desire to make new friends, contribute to social welfare, to get relief from boredom, and cognitive stimulation. Adult students tended to score higher than traditional-age students on the professional advancement, social

welfare and cognitive stimulation.

In an effort to study the impact of life-change events on women's decisions to return to college, Blankopf [1] focused on the frequency and intensity of life-change events that had occurred in women's lives in the two-year period prior to college entry. Some events such as death or divorce were reported, but they seemed to serve as long-term motivating factors coupled with the women's perception of the need for personal growth and preparation for employment as they faced the future after finising their maternal role. College attendance was perceived as a rewarding personal-growth experience.

Using Boshier's [2] Educational Participation Scale, Wolfgang and Dowling [8] compared the motivation of adult and younger undergrads in various academic programs. Older students scored significantly higher on the motivational factor of cognitive interest that reflects an internal drive for knowledge for its own sake. They scored lower on the pursuit of forming social relations and meeting the external expectations of another person or authority. There were no significant differences between older and younger students on factors of Social Welfare, Professional Advancement and Escape/Stimulation. There was a tendency for both groups to score low on Escape/Stimulation, moderately on Social Welfare, and high on Professional Development. Comparing academic programs, they found that education students scored significantly higher on Social

Welfare than administrative science and general baccalaureate. On Professional Advancement, administrative science students were higher than the rest. And on Cognitive Interest, art and science students scored higher than administrative science students.

The purpose of the present study was to explore the relationships between demographic variables such as academic area, minority-majority and employment status, and motivational factors among older women college students. Minority-majority and employment status are specially critical variables to examine, because the forces at work that determine motivation may be different for women under different circumstances. For example, it is reasonable to expect that minority and unemployed women would be more strongly motivated by professional advancement.

Method

The subjects for this study were 200 undergraduate non-traditional-age college women attending two universities and two community colleges in Southern California. The ages range from 30 to 55 with a median age of 39. Of the total group, 124 were married and the rest were single, divorced, separated or widowed; 100 were employed and 100 were unemployed; 128 were caucasian and 72 were members of minority groups (36 Black, 25 Hispanic and 11 Asian and other). The academic areas were broken down as follows: Business and Public Administration (n = 57), Health Services (n = 45), Liberal Arts and Home Economics (n = 45), and Education and

Psychology (n = 29). There were 68 unemployed caucasians, 60 employed caucasian, 40 employed minority, and 32 unemployed minority in the sample.

The Educational Participation Scale developed by Boshier [2] and as modified by Bova [3] was used to assess five motivational factors. The factor tables and sample items are: Social Relations, "To make new friends"; Professional Advancement, "To secure professional advancement"; Cognitive Interest, "Just for the sake of learning"; Escape/Stimulation, "To get relief from boredom"; and Social Welfare, "To improve my ability to serve mankind." The items were marked on a 9-point scale going from "very much influence" (9) to "very little influence" (1). The scores on each factor were computed by summing the responses to each item and dividing by the total number of items in each factor.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations and the F ratios comparing the Educational Participation Scale Scores of groups in different academic programs. One-way ANOVA were run using the academic programs as independent variables and the motivational factors as dependent variables. The academic program groups did

Insert Table 1 About Here

not differ on Social Relations, Escape/Stimulation and Social Welfare. The groups differed significantly on Professional Advancement ($p < .005$) and Cognitive Interest ($p < .05$).

The post hoc analysis on Professional Advancement showed that those in the Liberal Arts/Home Economics program scored lower than the other groups who were not different. The post hoc analysis on Cognitive Interest showed that those in Liberal Arts/Home Economics and Education/Psychology were equally high and significantly different than those in the Health Services and Business/Public Administration. These results are consistent with the Wolfgang and Dowling [8] findings which showed higher scores by Administrative Services on Professional Advancement and higher scores by Liberal Arts and Science students on Cognitive Interest. They too did not find differences in Social Relations and Escape/Stimulation.

It is apparent from these results that adult women in college have realistic expectations from their education. Those who get into Liberal Arts do so not because of expectations in professional advancement, but more for cognitive interest and inherent enjoyment of learning. On the other hand, professional advancement appears to be more of a motivator for those in the Health and Administrative Services, and cognitive interest less so.

An examination of the mean scores on the five motivation factors by the total sample in Table 2 indicates that there is a tendency for adult college women to be motivated strongly by Cognitive Interest, moderately by Social Welfare, Escape/Stimulation and Professional Advancement and low by Social Relations. This pattern is consistent with the Wolfgang and Dowling [8] findings and reflects the seriousness with which adult women look at college

education. They go to college to learn rather than make new friends the latter being more prominent among traditional-age students. Although there is general expectation of career advancement, it is not the most prominent motivation for going to college among adult women.

Table 2 shows the means, standard deviations and the F-ratio's of the Educational Participation Scale scores by majority-minority and employment status. A 2 X 2 ANOVA for unequal n's was conducted to examine the relationship of majority-minority and employment status to the various motivational factors which served as the independent variables. No effects were obtained on the Social Welfare factor.

Insert Table 2 About Here

On Social Relations there was a significant majority-minority main effect and no employment or interaction effects. Minority women scored significantly ($p < .05$) higher than caucasian women. Minority women seem to expect college environment to be socially more enriching than caucasian women do.

On Professional Advancement, there were two main effects ($ps < .01$) and no interaction. Minority women scored significantly higher than caucasian women, and women who were employed scored higher than unemployed women. It is worthwhile to note that women who have jobs tend to be more motivated by prospects of advancing professionally than those who are unemployed.

There was a significant interaction on the Escape/Stimulation factor ($p < .001$) along with the two main effects. Unemployed caucasian women scored higher than the other groups who were not different. It is conceivable that unemployed caucasian women who go to college do so to escape boredom, and tend not to have professional aspirations. On Professional Advancement, they had the lowest scores although no significant interaction was obtained.

Interestingly, unemployed caucasian women scored the lowest of the four groups on Cognitive Interest where there was a significant interaction ($p < .01$) as well as two main effects. This means that they are not in college even for the sake of learning. It almost appears that unemployed caucasian women look at college as a substitute for daytime series watching, while minority women have more pragmatic concerns on their mind such as professional advancement and increasing their circle of friends. To examine further the high Escape/Stimulation motivation of unemployed caucasian women, their academic programs were examined. Close to 50% had either not declared a major or were in the Liberal Arts and Home Economics.

On the whole, these data indicate that adult women who attend college tend to have high Cognitive Interest in education, which suggests self-directedness and a strong internal drive for learning. Differences between academic program groups reflect a realistic relationship between area of interest and motivational factors, which contribute to the validity of the EPS scales. It is also

evident from the data that employment and majority-minority status are important variables in determining motivational factors for attending college by adult women.

These findings have practical implications for educational institutions seeking to serve adult students. Nontraditional students are somewhat different from traditional students in their needs and motivations for attending college [4], but they do not represent a homogeneous group.

Women represent the substantial proportion of adult students in colleges and universities [6,7]. However, what motivates them may depend on various demographic factors, two of which were examined in this study. Other variables such as marital status, age, early education experiences, husbands' educational level and occupations should be examined. Marketing efforts should be carefully tailored with the motivational needs of various subgroups of potential adult students in mind.

References

1. Blankopf, P. "The Impact of Life Change Events on Women's Decision to Return to College." E.R.I.C., ED 209496, (1981), 1-12.

2. Boshier, R. "Motivational Orientation of Adult Education Participants: A Factor Analytic Explanation of Hoyle's Typology." Adult Education Journal, 21, (1971), 3-26.

3. Bova, B. M. "Motivational Orientation of Adults in Technical-Vocational and Post-secondary Institutions." E.R.I.C., ED 189291, (1978), 1-17.

4. Cross, P. Adults as Learners. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1981

5. Galliano, G. and Gildea, K. "Non-traditional Students, New Faces and New Issues." E.R.I.C., ED 216615, (1981), 1-26.

6. Kelman, E. and Stanley, B. "The Returning Woman Student: Needs of an Important Minority Group on College Campuses." E.R.I.C., ED 167199, (1978), 1-30.

7. Title, C. K. and Denker, E. R. Returning Women Students in Higher Education. New York: Praeger, 1980.

Table 1

Mean, Standard Deviation and ANOVA's of Education Participation Scores of Academic Program Groups

Academic Program	n	Social Relations		Professional Advancement		Escape/ Stimulation		Cognitive Interest		Social Welfare	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Education/ Psychology	29	2.80	2.06	4.53	2.03	3.34	1.90	6.33	2.10	5.10	1.90
Health Services	45	2.90	1.80	4.86	1.71	3.46	1.99	5.95	2.01	4.69	2.27
Liberal Arts/ Home Economics	45	3.12	1.67	3.64	1.71	3.32	1.63	7.00	1.72	5.00	2.06
Business/Public Administration	57	3.08	1.84	4.87	1.67	3.50	1.67	6.00	1.79	4.29	2.02
F		.29		4.95		.16		2.73		1.21	
P		n.s.		.005		n.s.		.05		n.s.	

Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations and ANOVA's of Educational Participation Scale by Race and Employment Status

Majority/Minority Status	Employment Status: n = 100 employed $\bar{X}$	SD	n = 100 unemployed $\bar{X}$	SD	n = 200 combined $\bar{X}$	SD	2 X 2 ANOVA: Majority/Minority Status	Employment Status	Interaction
Social Relations									
Caucasian (n = 128)	2.60	1.49	3.02	1.49	2.85	1.55	3.84*	.31	1.23
Minority (n = 72)	3.38	1.98	3.25	2.07	3.33	2.02			
Combined	2.94	1.74	3.10	1.71	3.02	1.73			
Professional Advancement									
Caucasian	4.40	1.60	3.79	1.66	4.10	1.67	8.17**	8.71**	.67
Minority	5.38	2.15	4.37	2.09	4.94	2.18			
Combined	4.82	1.90	3.98	1.84	4.40	1.92			
Escape/Stimulation									
Caucasian	3.22	1.83	6.20	1.97	4.81	2.42	9.85**	30.12***	21.67***
Minority	3.66	1.96	3.91	2.18	3.77	2.08			
Combined	3.40	1.90	5.47	2.31	4.44	2.35			
Cognitive Interest									
Caucasian	6.48	1.73	4.62	2.14	5.50	2.16	13.57***	11.04**	8.97**
Minority	6.69	1.98	6.59	1.98	6.65	1.99			
Combined	6.57	1.85	5.25	2.29	5.91	2.19			
Social Welfare									
Caucasian	4.34	2.02	4.69	2.10	4.53	2.08	1.67	1.46	.11
Minority	4.71	1.94	5.12	2.22	4.90	2.07			
Combined	4.49	2.00	4.83	2.17	4.66	2.09			

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$
*** $p < .001$